

I call on the Pentagon, out of a sense of morality, at least, to stop the hypocrisy of saying they worry about our people being injured by landmines, and then do nothing to stop their use around the world. And it is not only our troops who are threatened, it is hundreds of millions of people who are killed and maimed by these indiscriminate weapons every day. Over 26,000 people every year, and most are innocent civilians.

This, Mr. President, is a landmine. It is an antipersonnel landmine. It has been disarmed. If it were active, with just the slightest pressure it would take my arm and most of my face off.

There are millions of landmines in Bosnia, many of which are made of plastic and virtually impossible to detect, and others are designed to spring up and explode at waist level, sending out horrendous shrapnel that would disembowel or cut in half somebody within 50 or 100 feet.

When we vote on the Department of Defense authorization bill, we ought to send a very clear message to the Pentagon that it is not enough to say you want to protect our men and women when they go in harm's way on peacekeeping of rescue missions or anything else. It is time to say we will take steps here, to show leadership, to set an example, to stop this senseless use of landmines worldwide.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for not to exceed 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ANOTHER GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, this year the American people have been treated to what can only be referred to as political theater of the absurd. The Republicans took control of Congress in January touting their so-called Contract With America as the vehicle for change and as the vehicle for the end of business as usual. Well, they weren't kidding. This year has truly defied all legislative logic. In some respects 206 years of process have been literally thrown out of the window.

There have been lots of talk and press events and, of course, photo-ops galore. Creative gimmicks have been used to highlight the grandiose plans of this new crowd. We have seen ostriches and bloodhounds and even golf clubs used to represent various points of view. Through all these shenanigans, the Nation has waited with bated breath for some real results.

To put it bluntly, the grinch seems to have stolen Congress' sensibilities. Here it is December 15, and the Nation is still waiting. The Nation has already lived through one record-breaking Government shutdown, and now we are facing the very real possibility that Federal workers will be furloughed for Christmas and Government services will once again be curtailed.

Today's deadline for keeping the Government running is looming and still there are no assurances that an agreement can be reached. While we in Congress jockey from one position to another seeming to be concerned only with protecting our collective political hides, the American people are wondering if we ever stop to worry about them or about the fate of the Nation.

Under the Constitution, the only real responsibility we elected Members of Congress have to worry ourselves with is that of ensuring the passage of the 13 appropriations bills that fund the Federal Government. That is all we really have to do. This year while Members of Congress have spent months and months raising the public's expectations for an end to legislative gridlock and a new blueprint for governing, we seem to be more preoccupied with one petty political nuance after another. Instead of ensuring that the people's needs are met, we are arguing over the size of the negotiating table, how many people can attend, and which door of the airplane we can use.

All of this is an unnecessary and unwarranted diversion. This year, as always, there are differences in priorities between the Democrats and the Republicans and between the Congress and the White House.

What is disturbing about our current situation is that we seem to have forgotten the concept of legislative compromise. No legislative product ever embodies the wishes and desires of all involved. Unfortunately, the political give and take that make our system of government work are sorely lacking. There is no give and take. Instead, members seem more concerned with sowing the landscape with political seeds that can be cultivated and harvested during next year's election campaigns. As I have often said, there really are matters that are simply more important than political party—more important than either political party. Responding to our elected responsibility to the people is one of them. We cannot let the American people down again or we all surely risk the wrath of the voters. And I say this to those who are focused more on November 1996: You will surely reap what you have sown!

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, at the appropriate time, on behalf of the majority leader, I will move that the Chair lay before the Senate a conference report to accompany H.R. 1530, the Department of Defense authorization bill.

It is anticipated that there will be an objection. Since this is not a debatable motion, then at such time as the majority leader indicates—I believe it will be shortly after the motion to oppose moving forward—there will be a roll-call vote.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the distinguished senior Senator from Virginia and the distinguished senior Senator from South Carolina, both of whom are dear and respected friends of mine, and I have had some discussion on this. I anticipate asking for—and there may be others for that matter—a vote on the motion to proceed.

I tell the Senate and my distinguished colleagues that if I had intended to hold up the motion to proceed, of course, I would use the parliamentary tactic, instead, of asking for a vote on the motion to proceed requiring the reading of the bill which—it is about this big for anybody who cares. That is about 1½ feet high, and it would take a very considerable time to read. I am not going to request that, of course. I have never engaged, in my 21 years here in the Senate, in such tactics. I will, however, ask for the vote on the motion to proceed, and I assume the majority of Senators will vote to proceed.

I do this because of my concern about one provision, as I said earlier, on landmines. This is a provision that was neither in the House bill nor in the Senate bill. We passed by a two-thirds rollcall vote in the Senate a provision on landmines. The House had nothing.

When it became contentious, I said to the distinguished chairman of the committee, to the distinguished Senator from Virginia, and to the distinguished Senator from Georgia, Mr. NUNN, "Why don't we just remove the Senate provision?" In other words, recede to the House, which is no provision.

It is my understanding that was going to be done. It was my understanding in the conversations with the Senators involved that would be done.

I was then told by Senate staff—not by Senators, but by some Senate staff—that they could not allow their Senators to go along with such a commitment. I find that frustrating, of course, because Senators are the ones elected. And I have found that the Senators I have dealt with—especially those whom I have just talked with—have always been extremely truthful with me, as I have always tried to be with them. But my concern was—and